1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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The genealogies which related members of one segment to those of another were made up not only of links from father to son but also from lord to dependant, and were expressed in terms of the names of segments rather than the names of the people who headed them. A man related himself to the Paramount Chief not by his own genealogy but by the pedigree of the segment to which he belonged.[50] Although the number of links in such a pedigree may have been half a dozen or more, it did not cover more than two or three generations, whereas in most lineage systems remembered genealogies cover many more generations. The present kinship nomenclature, which mainly employs words of Nsenga origin, does not group relatives on a lineage, or segmental, basis but by generation. Presumably the system of nomenclature in use during the early stages of the Ngoni migration was similar to the present Zulu system in which lineage categories are used slightly. Tribes like the Shona and Cewa, from whom many captives were taken, employ systems of nomenclature with great lineage emphasis, but this emphasis is patrilineal among the former and matrilineal among the latter. The difficulty of combining patrilineal and matrilineal categories may have prompted the emergence of a generation system of nomenclature.[51]

Another point of difference between the Ngoni and many people with lineage systems is that, other than possibly the rites associated with choosing a new village site, there seem to have been no ritual observances or ancestor cult which would have differentiated one segment from another and united the various segments of lower order within a higher one. The only ancestors to whom supplication was made were those of the Paramount Chief. They were believed to be concerned with the well-being of the whole nation, and when sacrifices were made to them, the officiants were not their agnatic descendants but the Paramount Chief's lieutenants. We may, however, regard the byre in the headquarters village as a ceremonial, rather than a ritual, centre for a large segment.

In these four respects the Ngoni residential system differed from most lineage systems. On the other hand, in respect of other criteria it was like them. A segment recognized its identity and unity in contrast to other groups; rights and obligations of segment membership were distinguished from those of kinship; segments endured in time beyond the death of their founding members;

[50] cf. Read, 'Tradition', p. 466.

[51] cf. Barnes, 'Fort Jameson Ngoni', pp. 221-3; Gluckman, 'Kinship and marriage', pp. 170-1; Hoffman, *Nsenga kinship*, pp. 1-18; Pretorius, 'Terms of relationship', pp. 44-8.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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interests and those of neighbouring tribes against the North Charterland and the White settlers. Ngoni themselves have not been in a position to enforce their own point of view.

In the operation of the legal system White control has never been so complete, as we have indicated above. However the support given to the judgments of chiefs and others by the Administration prior to 1929 was political rather than legal, and the courts held by chiefs with or without the approval of the Administration did not form part of the same legal system as the Administration's own courts. In that year Native Courts with defined powers were established as part of the same legal system as other recognized courts in the British Empire, with ultimate connexion to the Privy Council.[16] In matters of religion White dominance has been achieved more slowly and has never been complete. But even in this field the religions brought by the Whites have triumphed over the cult of the chief's ancestors and to-day it is the Christians who are the ritual experts.

A parallel sequence of events has taken place in Nyasaland, save that there the amount of land alienated in the Fort Manning area has been small. A scheme of administration was given a legal basis in 1912, and was similar to that in Northern Rhodesia. It was revised in 1924, and in 1933 Native Authorities and Native Courts were set up.[17] The two principal missions in Fort Jameson District have stations in Nyasaland as well.

In both countries Ngoni have been required to pay tax. A hut tax was introduced on the Rhodesian side of the border in 1901 and at about the same time in Nyasaland. The annual rate has varied in Fort Jameson District from three to ten shillings. The imposition of tax has been of importance, not only in partly meeting the costs of Administration, but also in bringing Ngoni men and women into the wider economic system of farms, mines and offices of southern Africa.

Thus the Whites established control over the Ngoni in most of their important external relations. Politics, settlement, litigation, religion and economic activity have all been moulded by the Whites. In many respects this has been a passive process, for little that the Ngoni have done or not done has been significant to the decision to set up Native Courts, or to expand the production of tobacco, or even to open up a mission of some new denomination.

[16] By Ordinance No. 33 of 1929. Subsequent legislation is contained in Ordinances No. 10 of 1936, 18 of 1940, and 21 of 1942.

[17] Legislation is to be found in Ordinances No. 13 of 1912, 11 of 1924, 13 of 1933 and 14 of 1933.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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by this relationship participate in the presentation and consumption of the beer.

The religion of the Ngoni before the conquest was a cult of the Paramount Chief's ancestors. This cult has disappeared and all public religious activities are now conducted by members of the various Christian denominations, Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed Church Mission, Anglican (U.M.C.A.), Seventh Day Adventist, and Watch Tower. There are a few adherents of other Christian sects who do not have churches in the Fort Jameson area and there are a few Moslems. There is little evidence to show how much the disappearance of the tribal religion has altered relations between the chief and his people. Most chiefs have some connexion with one or other mission, attend mission services from time to time and send their children to mission schools. The evangelists, deacons and elders of the churches act as leaders of the community in certain situations, particularly at funerals. Advancement within the ecclesiastical organization can be an alternative route to high status, but in most secular matters church leaders do not rival the chiefs. In church, chiefs are treated with respect and given seats of honour, while tribal and county meetings are usually opened with prayers led by a catechist or elder of the denomination to which the chief is attached.

The sanctions which people can use against their chiefs are diffuse rather than organized. If the conduct of a chief is regarded as outrageous, the senior lieutenants of his county segment and other traditionally important people may hold a small meeting in the chief's village and there rebuke him for his misbehaviour. If the chief has offended against one of his people, say by striking him, the lieutenants may tell the chief to pay a beast to the wronged man as damages. If it is a minor chief who is involved, the Paramount Chief is sometimes told of the matter and calls the minor chief to his village to reprimand or caution him. A chief who flouted the instructions of his lieutenants or Paramount in matters of this kind would lose a great deal of the support of his people on which his position ultimately depends. The common people themselves cannot take much direct action against a chief of whose actions they disapprove, but they can gradually drift away from him into other counties and they can refrain from sending him gifts of beer or from answering his calls for labour, and they may show their disapproval by not saluting him in the traditional manner. The Paramount Chief alone is saluted with the word 'Baiyete',[14] a salutation which symbolizes his former position as head of an

[14] cf. Zulu *Bayede*.

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and settled where another village already existed.[1] In both forms, this new settlement was called the *kuzungulu* village, 'the one which goes in front'; and the village which was left was known as the *gogo* village. This use of the term *gogo* (literally 'grandparent') for house and village had a common basic connotation. It expressed the concept of being left behind to look after something, the *gogo* house being passed over for the heir to the Paramountcy or chieftainship but charged with ritual and ceremonial duties; and the *gogo* village being left behind to take care of the traditions and generally also of most of the widows of the deceased Paramount or chief. Each *kuzungulu* village eventually divided on the death of its owner, part 'going forward' with the new successor, part remaining behind. The main groups in the village which went ahead or which remained were the houses connected with the new Paramount or chief or *mulumuzana* and those connected with his dead father. In the chapter on houses (Chapter III, Part III) this process will be examined in greater detail.

The third related institution was the provision for guarding the spirit of a dead Paramount or chief and those of some leading *abamuzana*. A senior woman was always guardian of such a spirit and in her hut were kept the ritual objects: spear, wooden dish, baskets, fire-stick, which were used in sacrifices to the ancestors. The guardianship of the spirit of a dead Paramount was always associated with the village which had been his *kuzungulu*. His corpse was buried on the edge of the kraal containing the cattle of the house where he had grown up, and this village became the *gogo* village associated with him, where his spirit was guarded in a hut, probably though not necessarily belonging to one of his widows. The recognition of such a woman guardian was a matter for selection and appointment, and was the responsibility of the senior men of the *gogo* house in that village in consultation with the senior men of the *gogo* house in the dead man's father's village. The concept of guarding the spirits of important men, and the means by which such guardianship was practised, will be more fully discussed in Part IV in connexion with the ancestor cult.

THE NGONI KINGDOMS AND AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

In the final section of this chapter we shall look at the Ngoni kingdoms in their relationship to other African kingdoms and states such as those described in *African Political Systems*.[2] A methodological problem arises here. In this study a number of references are made to the Ngoni kingdoms in pre-European times, especially in connexion

[1] This form of the institution was found in densely populated areas and the incoming households dominated the original ones.

[2] Fortes, M., & Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (ed.). *African Political Systems*. O.U.P., 1940 pp. 9–23.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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571 643 function and authority was largely evolved and built up during the Ngoni migration across the Zambesi and the early settlement in Nyasaland.

643 The office of the Paramount was supported by three typical Ngoni institutions. The first was the regency exercised by the man who was held responsible for the care of the office of the Paramount. He was called 'the one who takes care of the country', 'the one who has to put the new *inkosi* in his place', 'the one who takes care of the young *inkosi* until he enters his father's place'. We shall see later how this principle of regency operated in particular cases in the succession to the Paramountcy. It proved to be an effective provision both in the case of a minor who was recognized as his father's heir, and during an interregnum while the succession was being discussed. The Ngoni showed a clear understanding of what functions the regent ought to perform, and when he exceeded these functions and usurped, or tried to usurp, the Paramount's position they condemned his action as wrong.

The second institution which supported the Paramountcy was the 'big house' from which the heir to the Paramount had to come. We shall see later that it was not always considered essential that the heir should be the actual child of the wife in the big house. A boy could be adopted into the house and, by Ngoni kinship rules, he was then a child of that house and of the woman in it.

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643 The third institution, which made the Paramount immortal at death after having been supreme in his life-time, was the Ngoni practice of 769 'guarding his spirit' in a hut, usually in the village where he had lived. The guardianship of a spirit was not practised exclusively for the Paramount. All the chiefs and the heads of the Swazi clans had this provision made for their spirits when they died, but in national crises prayers addressed to the spirits of former Paramounts were of supreme importance.

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The royal clan and the big house

643 614 565 184 Among the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans which formed the Ngoni aristocracy the royal clan had a unique position. Not only was it the clan of the Paramount, but its members had social rank and prestige because they belonged to his clan. In the northern kingdom informants showed awareness of the fact that their royal clan of Jere was not one of the well-known clans in the south. Other clan names found among them, such as Ngomezulu, Thole, Nzima, Nqumayo, and many more, were known to be clan names among the South-eastern Bantu. The following explanation was given by Cibambo about the name Jere and was the one most widely accepted:

> The Ngoni themselves say that the clan name of Jere was given during the journey, and that it arose out of the number of people who were with Zwangendaba. When the Ngoni want to speak of a large number of people they use two well-known words which are: '*Ngu Shaka*' (it is Shaka);

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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When the Queen Mother, who had in her husband's lifetime been the big wife of his village and the head of his big house, moved out with her son to his *hawugulu* village, she had the unrivalled distinction of occupying the *indlunkulu*. While her hut was the centre of all hospitality and of ceremonials such as marriages and funerals, she was aware that her daughter-in-law, her son's big wife, was the leading lady of that village by right of being the Paramount's big wife and the mother of his heir. Such a situation could have produced friction between the big wife and the Queen Mother, but informants were shocked at the idea of two women in such positions not being able to control their tempers and adjust any differences which arose. I never saw any visible signs of friction. The Queen Mother and her co-widows in the village seemed aware that their time of active participation in royal village or national affairs was over, and the Queen Mother appeared content to occupy the *indlunkulu*, provide a meeting-place for all the women, and give advice and counsel when invited to do so. Part of her duty in occupying the *indlunkulu* hut was to keep the ritual vessels for sacrificing to the ancestral spirit of her late husband, the former Paramount, and when the sequence of ceremonies after his death had been completed, she looked after his spirit which had been 'brought back' to that hut.

In the central kingdom, when the Paramount Mputa died in Tanganyika, a regent took care of the kingdom while his son Cikusi was a minor. During that period the royal village built by Domwe mountain was a very large one divided into hamlets. The position of Queen Mother was then held by NaMlangeni, formerly the big wife of Mputa, who had a daughter Manga, but no son. A son, Cikusi, born to the next wife, was put into the house of NaMlangeni and brought up there. Golosela Nzunga, the *induna* in charge of her house, was also in charge of the section of the royal village called Ziyembe. When the royal village divided, its constituent hamlets spread out from Domwe and the section called Ziyembe moved to the east towards the escarpment. The head village of the Nzunga clan was built there, and Golosela continued as *induna* for NaMlangeni. She went with him, while Cikusi's own mother went into his *hawugulu* village in the section called Liwisini sited near the Kirk Range. NaMlangeni took care of the spirit of Paramount Mputa in the Nzunga clan head village of Mcakatha. Her hut in that village was the *indlunkulu* and after she died her daughter Manga came to live in that hut and look after her father's spirit.

This brief account of the succession of a Queen Mother in the central kingdom brings up the question of succession, which was a vital element in the office of the Queen Mother, in respect both of her occupancy of the *indlunkulu* and her guardianship of the spirit of the dead Paramount. In the case of a successor to the Queen Mother of a recently deceased Paramount, two alternatives were open. The reigning Paramount's big wife could succeed to the *indlunkulu* and to the

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614 *mukwasana* was not invariably [illegible]. Some informants said that *akwasana*
622 were appointed by the Paramo[illegible]nt. Others said that if the ancestor of a
Swazi clan was known by na[illegible]e to have crossed the Zambesi with
Zwangendaba or Mputa then [illegible] his descendant in the direct line was
always a *mukwasana*.

614 It was the criterion of havi[illegible]g a known ancestor and knowing the
genealogy of the clan that was [illegible] most widely accepted in acknowledging
[769] the head of a Swazi clan as *mukwasana*. At the clan head village
prayers were addressed to this [illegible] ancestor, his cattle were sacrificed, and
the names recited as far back as [illegible] tradition and memory could recall. Later
we shall see that there were [illegible] said to be about 25 Swazi clans in the
northern kingdom and 29 in th[illegible]e central. Among these about 15 in the
northern and 12 in the centra[illegible] kingdom had head villages where the
ancestor cult was performed. [illegible] In the central kingdom several of the
leading clans had their head vil[illegible]ages in Portuguese territory, and there-
fore did not carry out the cult [illegible] in the central kingdom.

554 In the hierarchy of the clans [illegible] the Swazi clans were the acknowledged
614 leaders. In village and national [illegible] life this leadership was accorded to the
royal clans and the clans of the [illegible]hiefs, and was the reason for the respect
shown to *akwasana* who had [illegible]o direct political power. Only the heads
of Swazi clans possessed *izi[illegible]hozo* (honorific epithets) which com-
memorated events in the past [illegible]history of the clan leaders. On all cere-
monial occasions heads of Swa[illegible]i clans, whether in national or in village
affairs, took precedence over th[illegible] rest when walking in procession, stand-
ing for dances, taking part in [illegible]itual, or sitting down at feasts. Certain
[766] forms of burial, such as the use [illegible] of a sheep-skin, and placing the corpse
on a shelf in the grave, were [illegible]bserved only for members of the Swazi
clans.

582 In arranging marriages, the[illegible]re was, in addition to strict exogamy
614 within a clan, a prohibition on [illegible] marriage between clans which had *cibale*
(brotherhood) relations. In the [illegible] central kingdom the royal clan, Maseko,
had *cibale* with the Ngoao clan [illegible] which provided the royal shadow, and
[642] with the Nzunga clan. The N[illegible]unga and the Maseko clans shared the
same taboos, notably elephant [illegible]nd fish. As well as prohibited marriages
between certain clans, there w[illegible]re preferred marriages between certain
others. In general there was [illegible] preference for marriage between the
families of leading Swazi clans. [illegible] In the northern kingdom the Nqumayo
clan had a preference for marr[illegible]ying into the Thole, Nhlane, Maluleka
and Pakati clans. It was alleg[illegible]d that formerly they could marry only
into these clans, but in the 192[illegible]o's exceptions were found in a number
of villages.

614 The following lists of the na[illegible]mes of Swazi clans were collected from
informants in the two kingdo[illegible]ns, who were questioned closely about
which names should be include[illegible]d under the title of Swazi. This was the
grouping claimed by the Ngoni [illegible] in both kingdoms. They said emphatic-

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CHAPTER 1

THE ANCESTRAL SPIRITS AND THE ARISTOCRATIC TRADITION

THIS section is not an account of Ngoni religion. It would require a study in itself to examine their beliefs about supernatural beings, their ideas on cosmogony, their concepts of the causes of disaster and sickness, their approach to and practice of forms of magic, and their attitude to witchcraft. Living in Ngoni villages, listening to individuals of different ages discussing prosperity and disaster, the seen and the unseen, the known and the feared, it was clear that it would be difficult to isolate a comprehensive system of beliefs and say that these were distinctively Ngoni beliefs concerning religion and magic and witchcraft. The observer was always aware of the intermingling of ideas and practices from the many Nyasaland tribal peoples who lived side by side and were in constant contact with one another in all those spheres of thought and action which demanded explanation and some remedial or therapeutic treatment. Among the Nyasaland tribes in the 1930's the influence of sixty years of Christian teaching by the missions played an important part, since the missions had introduced western medicine and education as well as a new religion and ethic, and so had influenced both thinking and action among their converts and their families.

In this complex situation it was virtually impossible to say: this is the Cewa religion, this is the Tumbuka cosmogony, this is Ntumba magic. It was nevertheless clear that there was an Ngoni cult of their ancestral spirits, which was not shared, in the form in which they practised it, by any of the neighbouring peoples, and the Ngoni had their own selective methods of relating it to Christian beliefs and practices. One reason why the Ngoni ancestor cult could be singled out as peculiar to them was its foundation in their aristocratic tradition. As long as the Ngoni political and social structure and organization survived, including the reciprocal roles of leading men and important women, the concept of houses with their ownership of cattle, and the role of the *gogo* house in maintaining tradition and carrying out ritual, the performance of the cult of ancestral spirits was assured. The eminent ancestors whose spirits were guarded in a village and who were known and remembered were addressed in times of trouble, and meat was offered to them as a form of sacrifice from the herd of cattle associated with the house to which they had belonged. This section will deal with the cult of ancestral spirits of the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans who formed the political and social aristocracy. Thus, in the form described here, the cult is

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exclusively related to the aristocratic tradition, and no account will be given or analysis made of ancestor cults practised by those groups in the two Ngoni kingdoms who were not of the leading clans. In the ancestor cult, as it will be described here, the emphasis was always on known and named spirits of the dead, associated with the village where the ritual was performed. In the approach to these known and named spirits—an approach which I have called a cult—there were three essential components: the diviner, the ritual address and the cattle. The diviner's role we shall discuss in Chapter III and the ritual forms of addressing the ancestors in Chapter IV. The Ngoni believed they could not approach their ancestral spirits except through their cattle, which had first to [825] show that the spirits agreed to prayers being made, and the sign was that the beast urinated. The sacrifice of a beast was an integral part of the rite, which was concluded by the suppliants eating the meat together. At no point in their common life did the Ngoni more clearly demonstrate their dependence on their cattle than in the ritual of addressing their ancestral spirits. For this reason, in Chapter II we shall review the place of cattle in Ngoni life and relate it to their role in the ancestor cult.

Ancestral spirits of the Ngoni Paramounts.

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The reigning Paramount and his predecessors in that office held an unchallenged supremacy in the hierarchy of the Ngoni kingdoms. The Ngoni believed that the line of dead Paramounts similarly led the hierarchy of the ancestral spirits, and that the dead Paramounts had power to help the Ngoni nation in time of need. It was taken for granted that when Paramounts died they would continue to be powerful and held in great respect, and that their position in the spirit world would enable them to influence UMkulumqango, the Great Spirit. This Great Spirit was believed to be the creator of all things and the ultimate source of power, particularly of sending rain, success in war, and deliverance from pestilence; and he was in general regarded as the giver of health and strength to mankind. The Ngoni held that those ancestors who were nearest to the living in time, whose names they knew, possessed less power than the remote ancestors whose names had been forgotten. On the same principle UMkulumqango, the Great Spirit, the originator of all creation, possessed more power than any other being, but, since he was so far removed in time from the living, no one could know his praise-names or his genealogy, and therefore he could not be addressed directly. In the same way the remotest ancestors of the Paramount could not be addressed directly because their praise-names were unknown to living men. Only those direct ancestors of the Paramount, whose names and genealogy and praise-names were known, could be addressed correctly and they could be counted on to use their influence with remoter and more powerful ancestral spirits and with the Great Spirit himself.

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As one of the Ngoni said: 'The spirits of the dead Paramounts were the guardians of the whole nation. These *amadlozi* stood between UMkulumqango and the people. They were never worshipped at times of plenty and prosperity, but at the time of crisis and danger.'

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In pre-European days there had been two special occasions when the spirits of former Paramounts were addressed on behalf on the whole nation. One was at the time of the *incwala* or first-fruits ceremony, which as we have seen was given up before the final settlement in Nyasaland. This was an occasion uniting all the people with songs and dances at the village of the Paramount. The second occasion was in time of war before the army went out on a raid. This could take place more than once during the fighting season, and always at the Paramount's village.

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The remaining occasions for addressing the spirits of former Paramounts on behalf of the nation were when epidemics threatened, when there was a drought, or in the serious illness of the Paramount or of a leading member of his family. In prayer for rain or for the recovery from illness of someone of the royal clan, the diviner had to be consulted about which of the ancestors of the Paramount should be addressed. The ancestor indicated by the diviner had to be named in the ritual, his genealogy given and, as a rule, his particular attributes and his praise-names mentioned. The following account was given to me by Mlonyeni Jere, who prayed for rain in Elangeni in 1935:

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¶ When the rain stopped, the *amadoda* spoke among themselves 'What shall be done?' If they could not find out who had made the rain to stop, they said 'We must ask the *isanusi* (diviner). Perhaps it is one of the *amadlozi* (spirits) who are stopping the rain.'

If the *isanusi* finds it is the spirit of Hlacwayo, then all the big people are called to come to the kraal at Elangeni. Then they say 'We should choose a black ox with no white spot and bring it to the kraal.' They appointed a speaker who knows how to speak well all the names of the chiefs who have died. This man says to the spirit 'This cow is yours. You must eat it all. Then you must tell UMkulumqango our troubles.' If it urinates or makes dung, the spirits agree. This praying to the spirits is in the kraal in the evening. At early dawn next day someone is sent to kill the ox. While it was being flayed, the huts of the chief wives were smeared with cow dung on the floors and on the place outside the door. The meat was cooked in the kraal by the *amadoda*. Some of it was taken into the *indlunkulu* and kept there for one night so that the spirit might lick it.

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The Paramount had already eaten in the kraal and the meat was divided for the *amadoda* according to their age regiments. After they have eaten, a big man rises up to thank the spirit with his titles and praise-names, and all the people answer *Bayete* and there is a war-dance in the kraal. Then they look up and see clouds coming. Then the rain comes.

This particularizing of the appeal to an individual dead Paramount in the ancestor cult was an essential element in the ritual, and there seemed

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769 to be no occasion and no form of ritual in which a generalised appeal was made to the spirits of all former Paramounts.

The reasons for this were related to the place of the sacrifice and the herd of cattle used. The place was determined by the village where the spirit of the dead Paramount was guarded by a particular house, and where some at least of the cattle belonging to that house were kraaled. Thus, in the northern kingdom, the spirit of Zwangendaba Jere was addressed in Ekwendeni; of Hlacwayo his father in Elangeni; and of Magangata his grandfather in Hoho. In the central kingdom the spirit of Mputa was addressed in Mcakhatha and also in Lizulu; and of his father, Ngwana, in a village in Portuguese territory. I heard no reference to the spirits of more recent Paramounts being addressed, and when I asked the reason several informants suggested that it was important to address the Ngoni Paramount who had been with his people in the south, and who therefore knew the names of the spirits of former Paramounts who had died in the south, names which the Ngoni in Nyasaland had forgotten. On the other hand, provision was made for the guardianship of the spirit of each successive Paramount, and in central Ngoniland there was provision for guarding the spirit of a Queen Mother, NaMlangeni, the big wife of Mputa who survived him, and of her daughter, the Royal Sister Bambo Manga. The reason given for the guardianship of the spirits of these two royal women in Mcakhatha illustrates the close link between the village where the spirit was guarded and the herd of cattle kept there and was explained by informants in the following terms. While the central Ngoni were still in Songea Paramount Mputa wanted cattle to give as *lobola* for his marriage to NaMlangeni. He went to Golozela, the head of the Nzunga clan, and asked him for cattle, which were handed over to the father of NaMlangeni. Golozela Nzunga then became the *induna* of the house of NaMlangeni in the royal village and her daughter Bambo Manga lived in his section. The cattle given for her *lobola* when she was married were put in the kraal of Golozela Nzunga to repay him for his previous gift. After her husband's death, Bambo Manga returned to the Nzunga head village where her cattle were, and assumed the guardianship of the spirits of her mother and of her father Mputa.

Ancestral spirits of Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans

769 614 Ngoni informants often made statements such as the following by Cibambo:

¶ The Ngoni believed that each family had its own line of spirits (*amadlozi*) dating far back to the origin of that family, and that these in succession carried the messages until they reached the unknown ancestors, who in turn had the right to carry the message to UMkulumqango.

When such a statement was checked in several areas it was clear that the families of the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans focussed their

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ancestor cult in the head village of their clan. If they were asked 'How do you address the spirit (*teta idloxi*)?' they gave the names and genealogy of the former heads of the clan and their attributes if they were known. If they were asked 'Where do you address the spirits?' the reply was always in terms of a particular village where a certain spirit was guarded.

The occasions on which the Swazi clan ancestors were addressed and sacrifices made were in cases of sickness of an important member of the clan. It was sometimes suggested that there might be trouble in the clan villages for which prayer should be made to the clan spirits, but when pressed the only specific instance informants could give was when the cattle did not thrive. They repudiated immediately any idea of prayer to the clan spirits in cases of drought or epidemics in the clan villages since those troubles, wherever they occurred, could only be helped by the spirits of the Paramounts who were concerned with all the land and all its people.

The procedure followed in the clan head village was the same as that for addressing the spirits of the Paramounts. In that village a diviner was consulted, he named the spirit who should be addressed, a beast was sacrificed and prayers were made. This was the Ngoni pattern of the ancestor cult, and it was limited to the Swazi and some of the trans-Zambesi clans. Its correct observance required that combination of cattle, houses, and known genealogies which only the leading clans possessed.

The living and the dead

At times such as funerals, and when talking about the ancestor cult, the Ngoni often used the phrase: 'Death cannot cut life.' They believed that human spirits had a continued existence after death, and that this existence was related to the place where they had dwelt, the people who were of their family and clan, and the cattle which belonged to their house and village. This continued association was not an automatic process. It had to be assured by the correct performance of the burial rites, the observance of stages of mourning and the deliberate 'bringing back' of the spirit to the village where it would be guarded and honoured after the final mourning ceremony was over.

In the Ngoni funeral rites there were distinctive elements in the burial of those belonging to Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans. In handling the corpse the legs were bent and drawn up to the body and the arms folded and crossed each side of the neck, so that the corpse seemed to be sitting and holding its head in its hands. It was wrapped in the skin of a newly killed beast. In the central kingdom men and women of Swazi clans were wrapped first in a sheep-skin, with a cow-skin put over it. The grave was a circular pit, with a small side chamber or shelf where the body was placed in a sitting position, propped up with large stones and facing south-east to the ancestral homeland. Personal possessions, such as skins and shields and baskets, were either put in the grave or taken to be

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the group of those living relatives who had performed or were about to perform certain rites for the newly dead.

These rites were the stages of mourning laid down in the Ngoni funeral ritual. They were stages in which all adults took part, and they fulfilled the need to build up the future links with the spirit who had joined the ancestors and to bring together in common acts those from whom death had removed one of their number. The following text by one of the leaders of a Swazi clan in the central kingdom puts together briefly the successive stages of shaving, drinking beer, eating meat, singing war-songs, ritual cleansing and widow inheritance, and bringing back the spirit.

¶ If a man died, the second day they shave; after 5 or 6 months they shave again and cook beer. This means the widows must take off their white *zitambo* (head bands). After 12 months they take off their black *zitambo* and kill a beast to praise the spirit so that he may return to his house. This is also the time for inheriting the widows.

When they take off the white *zitambo*, the brother of the one who died takes sheep dung and sprinkles it in the houses where the widows are sleeping. At the same time the men wash their hands with cattle dung. The meaning of this is to tell the widows to cook food for the brothers of the dead man to send to them when they sit by the kraal. This they do before they can see them.

From the ritual witnessed at many funeral ceremonies, which never altered in its main elements, and from discussions with Ngoni informants, it was possible to gain some idea of Ngoni beliefs about the relation between the living and the dead. It was clear that the attitude of the living towards the dead was one of respect and honour, but not predominantly one of avoidance and fear as among some of the neighbouring tribes. The post-burial ritual culminated in 'bringing back the spirit' to the village, and we shall examine this further in the last chapter of this section. An observer was always conscious of a sense that people were waiting for the return of the spirit, which had to be planned for and carried out by the living. During the interval between the death and bringing back the spirit, it was said to be 'in the bush'. When asked where in fact the spirit was, the answer was always 'We do not know. How can we know?' They admitted that the life of the spirits was unknown to them, and there was evidence of a slightly uneasy relationship during this interval of waiting. When the spirit had been brought back and was being guarded by some woman appointed for that purpose, then it was once more near to the living and their cattle, and it could be addressed correctly. In the absence of any clear concepts about life in a spirit world, the Ngoni clung to the ritual by which they believed they could establish and maintain contact of a safe and respectful nature between the living and the dead.

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178 In the central kingdom there were two instances of a modern adaptation of the ancestor cult, both of which were evidence of its close links with the aristocratic tradition; one related to a *muhumuzana* of a Swazi clan, the other to the royal clan. One of the first things which caught the eye of a visitor to the village of Mcakhatha was a large circular brick and cement tomb with a wooden cross on the top, in the middle of the village by the main kraal and within sight of the ruling chief's hut. It was the tomb of Njolomole Nzunga I, son of Golozela Nzunga who gave the cattle for NaMlangeni's *lobola*, and father of the ruling Chief Njolomole Nzunga II. The idea of this memorial originated with Lopati Nzunga, younger brother of Njolomole I and head of the *gogo* section of the village, and he had organized its erection. The bricks and cement were given by Europeans in the neighbourhood, and three beasts were killed for meat for those who carried the materials. The money to pay for the bricklayers' wages was raised by the sale of another beast. The name on the wooden cross was cut by the Chief's brother-in-law who was a carpenter, and Lopati said that the cross was for writing the name on and had no Christian significance. The tomb was declared 'open' to the public in the presence of a large number of people. A beast was presented to the Paramount Chief, and another beast was killed and cooked for a feast in the village. Beer was brewed in the huts of the two leading widows who had been in the big house and second house of Njolomole I.

This tomb was a memorial and not a grave, for Njolomole I had been buried in Ngoni fashion on the edge of the kraal, the fence of which was enlarged to take in the grave. It was regarded as a central point in the village. Ngoni visitors saluted it as they went by with the right arm upraised in Ngoni fashion, and war-dances and *ngoma* dances took place beside it. The idea of a brick tomb with a cross on top was of course a modern concept taken from European cemeteries in Nyasaland which Lopati had seen. It cost six cattle to put it up and 'open' it, and these cattle were taken from the herds of the big house of Njolomole I.

In the chapter on the Paramount (Part II, Chapter II) it was pointed out that in the central kingdom the Paramount Gomani I was shot as a result of the 'war with the English' when he refused to walk to Zomba for his trial. On the Zomba road near the turning to the mission station of Dombole was a track leading into some woods. In an open clearing was a brick and cement tomb to Gomani I, subscribed to by the central Ngoni (including those living in the towns of Blantyre and Zomba). A memorial fund called 'The late Gomani Memorial Fund' was opened in 1926, and three years later those who had organized the fund formed the Angoni Highlands Association, mainly of Ngoni working in Blantyre and Zomba and wishing to maintain their links with their home villages. In discussing the origin of this fund for the memorial informants pointed out that they were aware that Gomani I, unlike his father and grand-

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father, had been a fierce ruler, and had gathered round him bands of young men who were not easily restrained. Though they could judge his character in this objective way, they respected his office, and hence his death and the confiscation of cattle which followed were a deep injury to Ngoni pride. So thirty years after his death they collected money and put up the memorial, and the appeal was supported for three main reasons. One was to commemorate this Paramount who had not had the traditional cremation by a river; another was to remove the shame of his death; the last was to draw together all his people in a common act. Every year numbers of Ngoni gathered at this memorial and held a Christian service which was followed by a general meeting. This memorial service and meeting had a definite link with the ancestor cult, and illustrated in a particular form Ngoni beliefs in the relation of the living and the dead.

In the 1930's, as we saw in Chapter III of Part I, the form of Ngoni funerals and the ritual of mourning were closely related to the ancestor cult and were practised by the Ngoni aristocracy. These forms of ritual and their beliefs they brought with them from the south, and they were an important part of Ngoni culture. We shall see in a later chapter how some of these cultural elements were combined with Christian ritual, both for leading individuals of Swazi clans and for lesser members of those clans.

CHAPTER II

CATTLE AND THE ANCESTOR CULT

THERE are many references throughout this study to the importance of cattle among the Ngoni. In this chapter the place of cattle in Ngoni life will be examined with reference to the ancestor cult, and hence certain limitations have been imposed in the selection of material and its interpretation. There will, for example, be no analysis of the role of cattle in the economic life of Ngoni families and villages. Much of the material discussed has an economic significance which is immediately apparent, but the limitations set will not allow the economic implications of certain practices to be pursued further here. It is important for the main purpose of this chapter to make a brief analysis of some factors in the ownership, care, and use of cattle, and to follow that with references to some of the values and attitudes inherent in the Ngoni ownership and use of cattle. I made a preliminary analysis of these factors in a memorandum on standards of living in the central kingdom, published

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death, or he can give them to anyone he likes during his lifetime. Hence individual acquisition in the English sense involves the legal right of individual disposal; the individual possession of profits from such disposal; and the individual responsibility for complying with any regulations concerning cattle, such as inoculation, slaughter for foot-and-mouth disease, and testing of milk.

In Ngoni usage the concept of ownership involved the acquisition and disposal of, and the responsibility for, cattle, but behind this apparent similarity of terms lay a wide difference in interpretation. Cattle could be acquired by inheritance, by natural increase, by *lobola*, as payment in a court case, as a gift, or by purchase. Formerly cattle could be acquired in warfare and raiding, but never by purchase. With this exception of buying cattle for cash, the methods of acquiring cattle had not altered since the Ngoni settled in Nyasaland. In pre-European days in the Ngoni kingdoms only the Paramount, the subordinate chiefs, the *alumuzana* and the big *izinduna* possessed cattle. Having a herd marked the owner as a leading member of a leading clan, or as a famous warrior of a lesser clan whose distinguished war service had been rewarded by the Paramount giving him cattle, or allowing him to keep some of those he had taken from the enemy. New herds were formed when a Paramount or a chief moved out of his father's village and set up his own *lusungulu* village, taking with him one or more of his mothers who, together with his big wife, set up houses in the new village, and these houses were allotted cattle from the former undivided herd. Another way in which a herd was divided was when a big *induna* in charge of the house of a leading wife of a Paramount or a chief built a kraal for the cattle of that house near his own huts, and added to that herd any cattle which he acquired. Large Ngoni villages in pre-European days usually had one or more kraals on the edge of the village, as well as the big central one. When the large villages broke up and the *induna* moved off to found his own village, he still took care of the cattle of that house. If the house was one where an ancestral spirit was guarded, a successor was always appointed to live in the hut and guard the spirit. Hence the relationship of the house, its spirit guardian, its cattle and the *induna* in charge continued, though the personalities changed through death and for other reasons. This explained how in the 1930's cattle were found in one kraal which were said to belong to a house or a woman guardian of a spirit miles away in another village. Sometimes they were described as the cattle of a man long dead.

It is clear, therefore, that the Ngoni methods of acquiring cattle and building up herds did not result in a concept of individual ownership. Cattle were not willed from father to son, but the son of a Paramount or a chief, when he made his new *lusungulu* village, had the right to receive and to take with him the cattle of his mother's house; and the head of the *gogo* village who stayed behind also received and looked after the

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Cattle in the ancestor cult

The Ngoni, unlike the Swazi as described by Dr. Kuper,[1] had no clear ideas about the life after death as lived by their immediate ancestors with whom they had associated in their lifetime. They did not, as the Swazi did, picture them living somewhere surrounded with cattle and other familiar creatures and objects. The importance of bringing the spirit back (*ukubuyisa idlozi*) to the house where it would be cared for signified two main things for them. The first was the continuous association of the spirit of the dead with the living persons in the community to which he had belonged, through the individuals belonging to the house, the actual hut where the sacrificial vessels were kept, and the cattle which belonged to the house. The other significant point was that contact with the returned spirit, and through him with the spirits of more remote ancestors, could only be established in the village containing the cattle of the house to which the dead man had belonged.

We shall be examining some aspects of the ritual of addressing the ancestral spirits in a later chapter of this section. Here we shall establish three constituent parts of the ancestor cult in which cattle were essential links between those taking part in the cult and the spirits whom they addressed.

The first part was the group of ceremonies which took place at death, at the burial, at the first ritual shaving and at bringing back the spirit. A text by Lopati Nzunga (see Chapter IV, p. 200) illustrates how three parts of a beast—the skin, the kidney fat (*nseso*) and the gall bladder (*nyongo*)—were considered essential for Ngoni burial. It was interesting to find in Blantyre among educated Ngoni who were Christians and occupied clerical and commercial posts, that they had given up the cow-skin for wrapping the corpse and substituted a coffin. But they admitted confidentially that in most Ngoni funerals the use of the *nseso* and the *nyongo* was customary. After the burial the ritual shaving, shared in by all who attended the funeral, was accompanied by the killing of a beast and the consumption of its meat, though with no ritual significance beyond its association with the purification of the mourners and their integration as a group. From six to twelve months later the second shaving and the bringing back of the spirit was also accompanied by killing a beast and eating its meat. These ceremonies expressed the sense of loss felt for the human person who had died, the sorrow of the mourners, their successive acts of purification which served to bring them together, and the final bringing of the spirit to live among them again. As we have seen, each stage of the death and mourning rites was accompanied by the eating of a beast or the use of certain parts of a beast. The cattle of the house to which the dead person belonged were used to bury him or her, to strengthen the mourners, and to reintegrate the spirit with the living community.

[1] Kuper, H. *An African Aristocracy*, p. 186.

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769 825 787 In another part of the cult cattle played a still more direct part. When a diviner advised that prayer should be made to the spirit of a leading man on behalf of someone of his clan who was sick, the man who was in charge of the *gogo* section of the village informed the head of the clan or *banja* and they agreed to address the spirits, and to offer a sacrifice if the spirits were willing. The sign of willingness on the part of the spirits was for the selected beast, when it had been driven out of the kraal, to urinate or make dung. If either happened they said the spirit was willing, and arranged a time for the prayer and sacrifice. If neither happened, if the beast just stood still or lay down, the spirits had 'refused' and the sacrifice could not go forward. This sign or lack of sign by the beast could not be ignored, and was a further illustration that the Ngoni considered cattle to be essential as a medium of approach to the spirits of their ancestors.

When the beast 'refused', those responsible called the diviner again and asked for an explanation. He produced a reason and advised them to try again, and the process was repeated until the sign of agreement was given. There was always anxiety when the beast 'refused', partly because of the delay in sacrificing and partly owing to an uneasy feeling that they had left something undone and the ancestral spirit was not pleased with them.

The main part of the ritual of sacrifice to an ancestral spirit was killing the beast, offering the meat to the spirits and the eating of the meat by the principal persons concerned. This we shall examine more closely in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF THE DIVINER IN THE ANCESTOR CULT

791 769 It has been apparent in the chapters on the Paramount and on warfare in Part II, and in the two previous chapters of Part IV, that divining by an accredited person was a necessary preliminary for sacrificing to and addressing the ancestors.[1] I never heard or received any account of the ancestor cult in which divining was not specifically mentioned as the first step in the performance of the ritual. Moreover, all the diviners of good standing were themselves operating because they had contact with and were possessed by the spirit of an ancestor. By virtue of this direct contact with the spirit world the diviners claimed their special powers.

[1] The one possible exception was the first-fruits ceremony, but this had been given up before the Ngoni settled in Nyasaland, and the old men had no clear memories of the ritual followed.

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Dr. Kuper called the diviners among the Swazi 'the most powerful and respected specialists operating in both individual and national situations'.[1] I found that among the Ngoni also they were greatly respected once they had established their reputation for prophecy and diagnosis. Except on the occasions when they were called upon to carry out their functions the majority of diviners whom I saw in the 1930's lived in relative seclusion, and had no outward signs of power in any political or economic sense, though in the past some of the 'prophets' had also been warriors and leaders. Socially they were always shown great honour when they came in response to a call, or when they went visiting on non-professional occasions. They were addressed in a respectful tone of voice, given a mat to sit on, and village noises around them were hushed. They were, however, essentially recluses, withdrawn from public life except when they were called on to help in time of crisis, and they did not show any ostentation of wealth or position.

Dr. Kuper used the term 'specialist' to describe the diviners among the Swazi. In the Ngoni kingdoms there were many kinds of specialists owing to the existence of several tribal groups each with its traditional system of religion and magic, and each with varying methods of treating sickness, diagnosing the causes of misfortune, and interpreting omens and dreams. The diviners in the Ngoni kingdoms who were best known and on whom the greatest responsibility lay were those who were called by the Paramount in times of national crisis. Such responsibility and such fame had in pre-European days corresponding risks. The following story, which was told me in Hoho by Timoti Jere and which I heard quoted in several areas in the northern kingdom, puts in a traditional setting and with much circumstantial detail the kind of demands formerly made on diviners and the kind of treatment meted out to them:

¶ Zwangendaba in his coming out of South Africa arrived in the country of the Maculu at Mabiri. It is there now. When the *impi* was summoned it went out to contend for the country of the Sukuma. That *impi* wanted very much to be victorious, because it went to fight in two countries, in that of the Sukuma, where they took the long-horned cattle, and in that of the Ngonde, where they took the cattle without horns and with big humps. While the *impi* was away, the Paramount called all the *izinduna* and said 'Why has the *impi* delayed so long? Call the *isanusi* that they may divine. Perhaps the *impi* has run away and turned back.' Then the *izinduna* called the *isanusi*. In their divining they said 'The *impi* has run away and turned back.' There was one *isanusi*, his name was UMakhende Nkosi, who divined and said 'All the *impi* is there and it will return in this month. The long delay of the *impi* is because they have raided two countries, the country of the Sukuma with long-horned cattle and the country of the Ngonde with unhorned cattle.' It was so, and that month the *impi* returned and arrived at Mabiri with many herds of cattle as UMakhende Nkosi had said.

[1] Kuper, H. op. cit., p. 163.

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goods were handed over, the diviner thanked the giver in the customary manner, and his wife or child carried the gifts away. Informants said that leading Ngoni would never be mean in their payments to diviners, and that diviners of the upper grades would never bargain over their rewards. It was openly said that a leading diviner cared most for his reputation as a successful specialist, and that the kind of life he led and the sort of man he was did not induce a desire to be wealthy.

One aspect of the diviner's role among the Ngoni was that he, an individualist, was always summoned at the request of a group. In a case of sickness of one of its members, it was the family or the senior men of a house who summoned the diviner, and they gave him his reward and carried out his advice. When a family heard from the diviner that a sick member might recover if a sacrifice were made to their ancestors, they regarded the diviner, in Cibambo's phrase, as a go-between linking the living group and their dead ancestors. The diviner therefore, like the cattle, was an essential link in the relationship between the living and the dead.

CHAPTER IV

THE RITUAL OF ADDRESSING THE ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

In the course of the first three chapters of this section, and in earlier sections, many beliefs and practices have been discussed which bear on the ritual of the ancestor cult. In spite of the risk of some repetition it will be useful to bring together here in one chapter the main elements in the ritual, and in so doing to raise certain theoretical issues.

Dr. Kuper said[1] that among the Swazi, ancestor spirits were not worshipped, and she gave as the reasons for this statement that the spirits were addressed as living persons would be, being sometimes scolded and seldom thanked, and that indignation rather than humility was the attitude of the living when disasters befell them which might have been due to malice or carelessness on the part of the ancestors. Without entering into an argument on the nature of worship and its essential accompaniments, I would state that certain aspects of the Ngoni ancestor cult showed those features which are usually considered to be part of a people's worship. These were sacrifice, prayer, and purification, which, not necessarily in that order, were the main elements in the cult. There was, moreover, a connexion between the ancestor cult and ethical behaviour in Ngoni thinking. The guardianship of an ancestral spirit, involving much respect for the house to

[1] Kuper, H. op. cit., p. 192.

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which it belonged, was always given to a woman whose good character was vouched for.[1] The man who inherited the *gogo* village with its particular charge to look after the spirits of the dead, as well as the welfare of the living, also had to be someone of good repute. The responsibility for maintaining social cohesion in a village and among the members of a house with which the cattle, and therefore the spirits, were closely bound up, was one which the senior male members of that house regarded as a solemn duty. If people did not behave well the cattle would not flourish and multiply, and that would upset the spirits and be a sign of their disapproval.

Cibambo wrote the following account of the ancestor cult as a part of the presentation of Ngoni customs to his own people. As a Christian minister he was concerned with making a case to his own people for putting the Ngoni ancestor cult higher in the religious scale than the cults which used images in their worship. He was using his Christian beliefs to rationalize the ancestor cult, particularly in relating it to the concept of a High God. The Ngoni undoubtedly had the idea of a creator, remote and unapproachable by man, as his title implied, but nevertheless referred to as the sender of rain, sickness and other benefits and disasters for the country as a whole. Prayers and sermons by Ngoni ministers in Ngoniland used many of the old Ngoni terms for the creator to express their Christian concept of God.

"We think that the worship of the Ngoni was better than the worship of other tribes who were near them, for in their worship there were no images made of wood or stones or other things, but they worshipped spirits who were unseen. Nearly all Central African tribes believe that there is a God who created heaven and earth, and who is unseen by eyes. In worship they could not reach him himself with the things of their hearts, so they did not worship him himself. They followed the custom well known among the black people when they wished to talk to their chiefs or their fathers when there was something of importance. A black man thinks it is a great impertinence and dishonour to speak for himself in front of his chief or his father, so he sends someone of standing as his messenger who carries his words and returns with a reply. This custom took effect also in the worshipping of black peoples. In worshipping the creator they made use of a go-between, who stood between God and men. He knew how to speak for them and pray for them before God. They thought that certain created things ought to accomplish this work.

The Ngoni believed that there was God who was chief of all created things and the source of all. Some of the names they gave him were:

UMkulumqango	The Great Deviser
Uluhlanga	The Original Source
UMkulu Kakulu	The Greatest of All
UMnikazi we Zinto Zonke	The Owner of All Things."

[1] On other grounds, such as kinship, such guardianship might have gone to a woman who was not acceptable on moral grounds and was therefore passed over.

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In these names it is clear that God was known as the Beginning of All Things, the Owner, the One Above All. They knew him as the nourisher of the earth, sending rain and all good things, but they thought that he had little knowledge of his people. Nor could his people know much of him, so they did not worship him himself or speak with him. His character they did not know and so they were not able to praise or glorify him as they were the spirits of their ancestors, whom they knew thoroughly. They knew him from afar and so they could not pray and speak to him.

Since the Ngoni were not able to be at home with UMkulumqango so in worship they sought others known to them that they should tell them the things of their hearts, and these were the spirits of those who had died. At once when one of themselves died, they thought that now he is a spirit with living power greater than he had when a man on the earth, and that he is a spirit who can watch over and protect his relatives on earth, but they also realized that he had power to rebuke and punish. So this spirit was added to the spirits of the tribe who were worshipped. They thought that each clan had its own spirits, stretching back to the beginning of the clan. They believed that the recent spirits received the news from their friends on earth, and handed it on until it arrived at the spirits of very long ago and now forgotten. These then delivered the message to the Creator of all.

Cibambo's main intention in this account of Ngoni worship was to put the ancestor cult in its setting as a means of approach to the creator. He used the Ngoni concept of an intermediary, who was essential in the approach to a Paramount, to argue that the ancestor cult was not necessarily wrong but was an earlier stage towards Christianity. This was a theme constantly expressed in sermons and prayers in Ngoni churches. In the rest of this account he emphasized 'becoming an ancestral spirit', which we shall examine later in its ritual context; allocation of authority among the ancestral spirits; and the fact that prayer and sacrifice, which he called worship, were made chiefly in times of trouble, and not in times of prosperity.

It is legitimate, in view of Dr. Kuper's statement, to ask whether there was a fundamental difference between addressing an ancestral spirit as a go-between and worshipping him. The Ngoni were not trained theologians, except for Christian ministers like Cibambo, but they had a range of philosophical concepts to which it is impossible to do justice in this context. In the prayers which I heard their thoughts were focused on the ancestors whose names they knew and recited. Questioned afterwards, they said that there were other ancestors whose names they did not know, but the ones they named could not fail to be aware of the living, their descendants, since their spirits were guarded in a house and their cattle were sacrificed in the ritual. They therefore directed their worship, or address, to those who were known to them, believing that they would influence the remoter but possibly more powerful spirits whose names were unknown. Spontaneous references to

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769 771 UMkulumqango or other names for the High God were rare. When questioned they said that such a High God existed and the spirits knew him, but they, the living, did not. The Ngoni phrase, *asiyazi*, 'we do not know', and its Nyanja version, *sitingadziwa*, 'we cannot know', were constantly on their lips in discussions on this topic. Among Christians like Cibambo as well as non-Christians like Nzunga, their interest in the ancestor cult was part of maintaining their identity as Ngoni. The neighbouring tribes had other forms of ancestor cults but the Ngoni form brought from the south was distinctive, and many of the concepts and practices were known to the South-eastern Bantu peoples.

The ritual for a new ancestral spirit

761 775 The Ngoni believed that at the moment of death the spirit left the body. If a sick person fell into a coma and was unconscious for a long time they said that the person had died when the coma began even though they knew he went on breathing. This happened at the death of Bambo Manga when she had periods of unconsciousness before she died. They said that her spirit had left her at the beginning of the last long coma, even though they knew from her pulse and breathing that she was not dead. At the parting of the spirit from the body they had to care for both, in order that the new ancestral spirit might be happy and in the right relationship with the living. Equal importance was attached to caring for the spirit and to caring for the corpse, since the correct performance of ritual had deep significance for the dead and for the living.

763 775 When the spirit left the body it was believed to go to the bush at the outskirts of the village where the person had been accustomed to go to relieve himself. Between the death of Bambo Manga and the burial, each morning before it was light, the men marched with a dancing step up the path to the bush where she was wont to go, singing a war song dating from trans-Zambesi days which was sung at the sending out of the *impi*. Marching to the bush and singing the war song was one step in bringing the spirit back or, more correctly perhaps, keeping in touch with it so that it should not go too far away. This approach to the spirit between the death and burial was the first of three ritual acts, each called 'bringing back the spirit'. The other two occurred after the first and second ritual shaving.

764 The preparation of the corpse for burial has been described in the first chapter of this section. Those features of Ngoni burial were considered essential for the welfare of the spirit, and were carried out in the majority of funerals which I witnessed, whether the dead person was a Christian or not. An account of the burial of a leading *mulumuzana* in the northern kingdom who was a Christian, given to me by another Christian Ngoni and confirmed by some of the missionaries present at the funeral, emphasized all the distinctive Ngoni elements: the round

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grave with the little shelf at one side, the corpse wrapped in a cow-skin, the *nseso* and *nyongo* on the neck and forehead, the bent legs and upright sitting position facing south-east, and washing the face of the corpse at the grave side with a bunch of grass. On this occasion the Ngoni form of burial was followed by the Christian burial service after the grave had been filled in. During the digging of the grave hymns set to the tunes of Ngoni war songs were sung by the onlookers until the body was brought out of the house. After that there was complete silence while the corpse was lowered into the grave and the grave was filled up, until the service began. This combination of Christian and Ngoni ritual I witnessed many times. One of the missions set its face against the use of the cow-skin and declared that no Christian could be buried except in a coffin, but even this was sometimes disregarded and the full Ngoni ritual was carried out, followed by a Christian service.

After the body had been put in the grave and when the first calling back of the spirit from the bush had reminded the living that they had to care for this new spirit, a series of further duties faced them. These have been referred to as the first and second shaving. The first shaving we shall consider later as a necessary purification before eating the meat of the funeral rites which brought back the spirit right into the village. The second shaving, which took place from six to twelve months after the funeral, was the prelude to the time when the new ancestral spirit came, or was brought back, to its final lodging. The importance of this last rite was emphasized by Lopati Nzunga in his account of the ritual which took place at the tomb put up to the memory of Gomani I (see p. 165) When the building of the tomb under the supervision of Ngoni in the area was finished, many leading Ngoni from all parts, including those from the towns, gathered there for two days. Every morning before dawn they went up the forest paths singing war songs, as they did later at the time of the death of Bambo Manga, to call back the spirit from the bush where it had spent some thirty years. After a Christian service held by the tomb, the Ngoni *alumuzana* 'brought back' the spirit to Lizulu, Gomani I's village, to the house of NaMagagula his big wife. She was a Christian, so could not take the care of the spirit in her hut, but another of the widows of Gomani I, NaNsambi, who was in the house of NaMagagula, was chosen as guardian. Earlier in the proceedings, when they had decided that the tomb was going to be built, a diviner was consulted, the spirits were addressed in the kraal, the cattle showed that they agreed, and a beast from the herd of the house of NaMagagula was sacrificed and the meat offered to the ancestral spirits of the Maseko Paramounts. Then they built a new hut for NaNsambi and put in it new sacrificial vessels. When the spirit of Gomani I was finally brought home it was to this hut and guardianship that it came. They were uncertain about what had happened to the spirit in the thirty years interval and it did not seem advisable to probe

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too closely because of the still bitter feeling against Europeans for having caused the Paramount's death. It was quite clear, however, that since this essential step in the recognition of an ancestral spirit had been omitted at the time of his death, it was considered important to make good the omission, and the 'opening' of the grave appeared as the logical occasion.

In Mcakhatha village I witnessed a ritual second shaving for a man of the Nzunga clan, a son of the former chief, Njolomole I. This man had been absent from the village for many years, having left as a young man still living in the *laweni*, and his death in the south was reported by letter from a fellow villager to his relatives in the village. When the letter was received, a diviner was consulted and he advised a sacrifice to the spirits. The first ritual shaving of all members of the Nzunga clan and their affines took place as it would have done on the day after burial if he had died in the village, and a beast was killed and the meat offered to the spirits and ritually eaten. The women of the Nzunga clan and the wives and widows of Nzunga men put on *zitambo* or mourning caps. Six months later the diviner was consulted again, and a day was fixed for the second shaving 'to bring back the spirit'. The spirits of the Nzunga clan were addressed, the beast selected for the sacrifice urinated, the spirits 'agreed', and the shaving of the Nzunga clan members and their affines took place; this time the whole head was shaved whereas the first shaving was only a small patch on the temple. The men were shaved by the kraal, the women near the hut of the dead man's mother which was uninhabited. The women who were relatives or affines of the deceased took off their *zitambo* and unravelled the threads of which the caps were made, collecting in front of each a little heap of hair and thread. Then one of the leading women got up and said '*Tiyeni* (Let us go)', and the women went in procession to the stream, each carrying her little handful of hair and thread. As they passed they pulled a handful of dry grass from the roof of the hut by which they had been sitting to start their fires. By the stream each of the former mourners, eleven in all, made a fire of grass and dried leaves lit from a bunch of smouldering grass carried by one of them, put on it the threads and hair and tended the fire until only ashes were left. All these eleven women stood erect behind their fires facing the stream, except when bending down to fan the flames. When the fires died down each woman swept the ashes into the stream with her hand and splashed water on the site of the fire until no trace was left, lifting overhanging branches to leave a free passage for the ashes on to the water. The leading widow, a descendant of NaNdumbu, the famous woman diviner of Mputa's day, took a look round to see if all traces of the fires had gone, said 'We have finished', and led the way to the washing pool where all the women washed their clothes and their bodies. Meantime the men had been to wash in the stream on the other side of the village and had also burned their hair

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by the stream and swept the ashes into the water. The beast for the sacrifice had been killed early in the morning before the shaving, and the ritual eating of the meat took place. This second shaving and sacrifice were to end the mourning period and to bring back the spirit to the village. A widow of Chief Njolomole I was appointed to guard the spirit and she kept in her hut the baskets which had been used for the sacrifice.

When asked whether this ritual of bringing back the spirit was followed for everyone who died away from home, the answer was 'No. It was done for this man because he was a big one and he was the son of a chief.' Only for members of leading Swazi clans and some others of trans-Zambesi origin was the ritual invariably followed of recalling the spirit to the village where he had lived and where the clan sacrifices were performed with the cattle of the man's house. The ritual ensured that a new ancestor spirit was recognized, that provision could be made for its guardianship, and that the spirit had been brought back to the village even though the man had died and been buried elsewhere. The ritual was based, not on the assumption that the spirit would be angry if not so treated and might injure his living descendants, but on the belief that absence had weakened the bonds between members of the clan and the house, and that the ritual associated with the making of an ancestor spirit gave an opportunity for strengthening these bonds. This was achieved by bringing together the living to commemorate the dead; by repeating once again the traditional pattern of speaking to the ancestors through the cattle; by giving the spirits their meat which the living shared; and by making sure that the spirit of the dead man would henceforth be taken care of by an appointed guardian.

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In the case of important people of the royal clan and chiefs, the second shaving was a preliminary to bringing back the spirit to be taken care of permanently and there were two stages to this last ritual in the making of an ancestral spirit. Three months after the death of Bambo Manga there was an elaborate ceremony of the second shaving which was accompanied by brewing vast amounts of beer. On this occasion there was an offering of beer, not meat, to the ancestral spirits. The ritual began with consulting the diviner first about whether the beer would be good. The diviner reported that two quarrelling women were spoiling it, and the quarrel would have to be resolved before the brewing would be successful. The diviner was also asked which spirit should be offered beer on this occasion, and answered that NaQwana, the mother of Mputa and grandmother of Bambo Manga, was the one to be addressed. The next act was making the ritual fire, since all the beer had to be cooked on newly made fires. Lopati Nzunga took the ritual fire-stick from Bambo Manga's hut, two young men kindled a fire outside and the women took grass from Bambo Manga's fence to build a fire. The women picked up bits of this fire to kindle their own new fires before brewing the beer.

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● 769 When the beer was ready, Lopati took from Bambo Manga's hut the gourd cup (another of the ritual objects kept there), filled it with beer and offered it to the spirit of NaQwana, and left it at the right side of the hut where the corpse had been set upright before the burial. Cups of beer from the other houses who were brewing were also put in the hut and drunk during the night by the old women who had slept there continuously since the death of Bambo Manga in order to guard her spirit. The next morning the *ligubo* (war-dance) was danced by the grave at the edge of the kraal. When the time came for shaving, the men were shaved, first a small lock as at the first shaving, and then the whole head. The women were shaved over the whole head and cut the strings of their *xitambo* and unravelled the threads. Ritual washing at the stream and burning of the hair and threads took place as described earlier, but in this case the *nseso* from the beast killed at the death of Bambo Manga was burned on the same fires. Part of the *nseso* had been put round her neck for the burial, but part had been hung at the back of the hut, and this was now taken down and divided up to be burned.

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In the final part of the ceremony the men danced *ligubo* in the courtyard of Bambo Manga's hut, while the old women danced *umsindo* at her grave. All this went on for four days as long as the beer lasted, and the way was then clear for bringing back the spirit. The spirit had been 'guarded' in the hut where the old women slept, lest if it were empty the spirit might depart. The spirit was there, but not quite there, and could not be addressed as an ancestral spirit until the final 'bringing back'.

After the second shaving the leading men of the village had a new hut built in which Ciabwe Maseko, the daughter of Cikusi and older sister of Paramount Gomani I, was installed as guardian of the spirit of Bambo Manga. They bought new baskets, cups and a fire-stick, and destroyed the old ones. After the diviner had been consulted and had appointed a day for the sacrifice, a beast was killed and the meat offered to the spirit of Bambo Manga in the new hut in the new baskets. A sheep was killed at the same time and the meat of both was eaten by the men and boys.

We have now seen the process by which the living descendants and kin of a dead person recognized the spirit of that person as an ancestral spirit. This, as we saw, was no automatic process following on death. Ceremonies had to be undertaken and rituals performed which, through successive stages, brought the spirit of the dead into such relationship with the living that they could offer sacrifices and call on its name in the naming of the ancestors in the cult. These were acts performed by the living for the dead to cause the spirit to be settled in a place it knew and guarded by someone held in respect, and the living community hoped the spirit was therefore content and happy and ready to be approached and addressed as an ancestral spirit.

The ritual of the purification of the living

The living had certain rites to carry out on their own behalf which, if omitted, would bring the displeasure of the ancestors upon them. These were essentially purification rites for they removed the defilement of death from each individual who was closely related to, or had performed some office for, the dead; and through the rites the houses and utensils were cleansed, and the living community was re-integrated after the loss of one of its members. Shaving, burning the hair and mourning bands, and washing in a stream, were the prescribed acts for all who were connected by kinship or marriage with the deceased, or who had taken part in preparing the body or digging the grave. These were a succession of rites as we have seen, and emphasized the need for ritual cleansing over a long period, and for renewed integration between the living.

In addition to this generally practised ritual, there were some acts of ritual purification of houses and utensils found only among the Swazi clans. One informant told of the ritual washing of hoes used to dig the grave in the blood of a newly killed sheep. Several others spoke of the cleansing with sheep dung of the huts of the widows of a dead man at the time of the second shaving. On each occasion when meat was offered to the ancestors after a death, the living who ate the meat had to be made ceremonially clean through the act of shaving, followed by ritual washing at the river.

The ritual of addressing the spirits

There was no set formula for addressing the ancestral spirits but there were three parts in all the prayers which I heard and which were recited to me. The first was the naming of the ancestors. The leading clans in the two kingdoms demonstrated the way in which they prayed to their ancestors by repeating the names of successive heads of the clan. They began with the name of the ancestor who had died in Swaziland and those of his father and grandfather and other forbears if known. The Nhlane clan, for example, told me 'We pray: *UNdina ka UNchaba ka UMulawu ha UMazongolo*' and then added: 'UNdina died in our village of Hoho before we left Swaziland and he was buried in the kraal in Hoho.' The Mhlambi clan in central Ngoniland named their ancestor UNgekwazi who died in Swaziland, but they did not know any names before him. Other clans in the central kingdom used the name of their ancestor who crossed the Zambesi with Mputa. The most important element in the prayer, therefore, was the naming of the 'big spirit', sometimes coupled with more remote ancestors.

The second element in addressing the spirits was to call their attention to the beast which was to be offered to them if they 'agreed'. 'Here is your beast' was the formula. Although three or four beasts or even

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769 782 more were driven out of the kraal before the invocation of the spirits, one had been selected for the sacrifice, and the spirits' attention was drawn to this animal. They were reminded that it was their beast because it belonged to the herd of the house which guarded their spirits, and it was also their beast because it was to be killed and its meat offered to them if they showed agreement.

The third part of the prayer was mentioning the needs of the person on whose behalf the spirits were being addressed. The following words were used by Lopati Nzunga when he spoke this prayer to the spirits when Bambo Manga was ill:

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O thou Gumede!
O thou Mputa!
O thou great chief!
Here is your beast.
That your child may be healed,
Look on what is yours.
May you remain well
And your child recover.
We do not know,
We do not know.
If you say that she will die,
She is yours, this child of yours.
It is your affair.
As for us, we long that your child may recover.
If she dies, this child of yours,
We can only speak your names.
We cry to you for her.

769 782 Bambo Manga was there and her daughter and Chief Njolomole, and while Lopati Nzunga addressed the spirits, the rest murmured the names '*Wena Gumede*', '*Wena Mputa*', and added '*Mntwanoyako*' (your child), '*Inkomoyako*' (your beast). The form of the prayer varied, and might be a sequence of address and petition as in this one, or a series of ejaculations with little consecutive thought. It depended on the eloquence and skill of the speaker of the prayer, and that form of eloquence was a well-recognized characteristic among the Ngoni. In the central kingdom before the Europeans came, the head of the Phungwako clan had addressed the spirits of the Maseko Paramounts. Since the Phungwako chiefs had separated from Gomani's kingdom, the Nzunga clan performed this ritual for Bambo Manga in their head village. In addition to speaking the prayer, the same man had to see that all was done in order, the cattle driven out, the chief people assembled, and the subsequent action taken in accordance with the sign given by the spirits, either to kill a beast for sacrifice, or to find out from the diviners why the spirits had failed to agree. When the spirits 'refused' the first time Lopati Nzunga addressed them, he concluded the proceedings by gently

reminding the spirits that all depended on them. There was no tone of scolding in the words but a respectful plea for attention and help.

Alas O Paramount,
Alas O Father,
Why do you refuse us?
What do you say about your child?
We say we are your people,
Alas O Paramount.

In prayers for rain the same form of address was used with the three parts of the prayer. The ancestral spirits addressed were those of the line of the Paramounts, since the needs of the whole country were involved. The beast chosen for the offering to the spirits was a black one with no white markings, and in place of the sick person's name, the need for rain was mentioned. In the account given by Mlonyeni Jere (quoted in the first chapter of Part IV) he used this formula, mentioning the names, presenting the cow, and then asking the ancestral spirits to tell UMkulumqango how greatly they were troubled through lack of rain.

The ritual of sacrificing to the spirits

The essential equipment in the ritual of sacrificing was the spear with which the beast was killed; baskets, both the wide winnowing basket (*lichero*) and the food basket (*nsengwa*); the wooden dish (*ngcwembe*) on which the meat was placed; and the gourd cups for beer. These have been mentioned already in several contexts as the sacrificial vessels or ritual objects connected with the ancestor cult and kept in the hut of the woman who was guardian of a particular ancestral spirit. In the northern kingdom one of the Nhlane clan who carried out the ritual for sacrifices to UNdina Nhlane at Hoho said that in the hut of UNtani Nzima who died in Swaziland, but whose house had continued, was a spear, a black cloth for rain-making and a wooden meat dish. These were kept on the right-hand side at the back of the hut, and no one passing by could stand erect; he had to bend his back and head 'as men do when passing the *inhou*'. Since the coming of the missions these had been thrown away.

In the central kingdom I saw in several houses this collection of ritual vessels. There was always a spear, a food basket, one or more gourds for beer, and one or more of the wide, flat, winnowing baskets on which uncooked flour was carried and which was used for meat if there was no wooden dish. These were kept at the back of the hut hanging on the wall, above the place where sacrificial meat was laid.

The first stage of the ritual sacrifice was killing and flaying the beast. It was killed either in the kraal or just outside the fence, with a thrust from the spear, or more than one if necessary, by some member of the leading clan. At the time of the sacrifice when Bambo Manga was ill

the killing and the flaying were done just outside the kraal by young men of the Nzunga clan, younger brothers of the chief. The cow ran backward as she was stabbed and a second blow killed her, and she was dragged round when she fell to lie with her head to the south-east. Some of the blood from the wound was collected immediately by Lopati and taken by him and put in Bambo Manga's hut in 'the place of the spirits'. The cow was skinned with a few neat strokes of the knife, and a thin strip of meat about six inches wide was cut from the back. This Lopati put in the sacrificial food basket and he and the chief went with it to Bambo Manga's house. The three firestones were removed and the meat was spread on the glowing logs till it was cooked through and quite white. Bambo Manga, who was lying on her mat, washed her hands and face with water brought by her daughter and rinsed out her mouth. Two small pieces of the meat were given to her to eat, and the rest was cut up in small pieces and eaten by Lopati, the chief, his sister and Bambo Manga's daughter. This meat could only be eaten by that inner group.

The men who had skinned the beast cut it up and, following an Ngoni practice, laid all the meat on the gate of the reed fence surrounding the *bwalo*, and carried it to the hut and laid it outside the door. Holding the sacrificial winnowing basket Lopati directed the men to put in it three right ribs, a piece of liver, both stomachs, the heart and lungs, the fat from round the kidneys, a bit of the intestine and the spleen. The head of the beast was arranged facing towards Kabwazi's village, since he had always kraaled some of the Nzunga cattle.

Lopati took the basket into the hut and was followed by the head herd-boy holding the tip of the tail and the gall bladder. The basket with the meat in it was put on the floor at the back of the hut in 'the place of the spirits'. Lopati and the chief squatted on their haunches nearby, and Bambo Manga knelt on her mat while her daughter wiped the soles of her feet, and she went forward on her knees to the place of the spirits. Lopati intervened and said 'Please walk upright', but she refused and said 'I will do as my ancestors did'. Her daughter knelt behind her.

Then Lopati began to praise the spirits, calling on Mputa by name, saying 'Here is your meat. Please eat. We praise you. We are your children.' The rest ejaculated '*Wena Nkosi*', '*Wena, Gumede*' as if supporting him, keeping quite still and facing the place of the spirits. After the invocation Bambo Manga went back to her mat, and Lopati took the gall bladder and sprinkled the juice round her, and then round the meat basket and round the hearth-stones. The gall bladder was then put in a small pot with water in it and laid on the floor, and the tip of the tail was tied above the place of the spirits. The skin of the beast, which had been washed but not scraped, was brought in and laid on the ground between the firestones and the wall and the gate with the meat

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on was placed on it. The meat in the basket and on the gate stayed there all night.

Following the ritual of offering meat to the spirits came the ritual of cooking and eating the meat, both that offered to the spirits and the rest. After the basket of meat had been left all night in the place of the spirits, the large quantity on the gate was carried away and cooked by an old woman outside the hut of Bambo Manga's granddaughter. The meat in the basket which had been offered to the spirits was put in a pot and cooked on the fire in Bambo Manga's hut. It stayed cooking all day and all night till the following morning. Dzinthenga Phungwako, an old and highly respected *lidoda*, came to the hut and divided the sacrificial meat among all who were in the house, that is Bambo Manga, her daughter and granddaughter and several senior women. When they had finished the leading women stood up and thanked '*Zikhomo Maseko*', '*Zikhomo Magwagwa*'. Then they washed their hands and went to their own houses.

The large quantity of meat which had been laid on the gate and cooked on another fire in another *bwalo* was carried in a big pot and put down outside Bambo Manga's hut in the late afternoon. Her daughter came outside and divided the meat into three piles: a small one from the breast-bones for the women, a leg for the chief, the head for Kabwazi the headman of a neighbouring village, and the rest in a big pot for the men. A boy came to tell Lopati that all was ready and he and the chief went out to the place where the beast was killed, near the gate of the kraal. There were four groups already sitting there and the chief and Lopati made a fifth: the *madoda*, the senior men; the *majaha*, the young men; the *mabusa*, the herd-boys; and the little boys. Before Lopati divided the meat he and the chief washed elaborately with water brought in a gourd, and then he washed the knife before cutting the meat. He called the *madoda* to send someone for their portion in a basket, then the young men and the herd-boys were given their portions—a basket for each group, and the small boys had bits put in their hands. The eating was very sedate, there was no snatching of choice bits, and in each group the one who fetched the meat distributed it. There was the general atmosphere of a ritual meal rather than a feast, though the small boys smacked their lips appreciatively. From time to time Lopati called up someone from a group and gave him a bit more to divide up. When it was all eaten, a boy was sent to fetch water and the soapy leaves which the Ngoni used for washing, and the chief and Lopati and the *madoda* all washed the grease off their fingers. Then Lopati stood up and called out '*Siyadumisa baba, zihomo mntwana wenkosi*', 'We are praising you, father, thank you child of the Paramount', and the others all agreed and said '*Zikhomo baba.*' Then they all went together to Bambo Manga's hut and stood opposite her door and called out the same thanks. The women who had eaten their meat

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in three age groups on the verandah also came forward and, led by NaNkoloma, a widow of Njolomole I, thanked in the women's language, *'Zimata, zaithwa mntwana wenkosi.'*

I did not witness any ritual sacrifices in the northern kingdom but the accounts given me by informants corresponded closely with the ritual in Mcakhatha just described. When sacrificing for rain to the spirits of the Paramount, a black ox with no white spot was driven into the kraal in the late afternoon and the chosen spokesman addressed the ancestral spirits of the Jere clan telling them that this was their beast, they must eat the meat and tell UMkulumqango that the people needed rain. While this man prayed to the spirits he stood facing the beast, and everyone else sat looking in front of them and keeping very quiet. The women stayed at home in their huts and the Paramount stayed in his hut 'as if mourning'. When the beast urinated and showed that the spirits had heard, a messenger came and informed the Paramount. The beast was killed early the next morning in the kraal. While the flaying took place, all the huts of the chief wives were smeared with dried cow-dung on the floors and on the smooth place outside the doors. The meat, in two parts, was taken into the *indlunkulu* and left there all night at the back, so that the spirits might lick it. The next morning the meat was cooked in the kraal by the *madoda* and when it was ready they reported to the big *induna*. He called all the people into the kraal and divided them into companies according to their sections and head villages. The meat was given to the head of each head village who divided it among his group. When everyone had finished, one of the leading men stood up and began to praise the spirit using his titles and praise-names (*izitokozo*). The rest stood up and shouted *Bayete*. They then began to dance a war-dance but, the informants added, that was soon stopped by torrents of rain.

These chapters on the Ngoni ancestor cult bring to an end this study of the two Ngoni kingdoms in Nyasaland in the 1930's. We have seen how their distinctiveness as a people depended on the culture which they brought with them from the south and how this culture was found among the families of the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans. In the topics included in the three sections of this book: the political system, the social organization, and the ancestor cult, the main features of Ngoni culture are most clearly seen. In much of their economic and agricultural life there was little to distinguish them from their neighbours among the other Nyasaland peoples. The changes brought about by the missions, the schools, new forms of local government, and new types of occupation, were all tending to make the Ngoni less distinctive as a people. The conversion of some leading Ngoni to Christianity, as suggested in Chapter V of Part II, and the spread of schools were together the most powerful influences in altering Ngoni traditional culture. The

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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women's. For all ceremonies the men sat on the right side, and the women on the left, the place of honour for the leading man and woman being by the main door-posts. No young man or woman ever thought of sitting near them. The other place of significance lay between the fire and the back of the hut on the right-hand side; it was known as the 'place of the spirits', the 'ancestors' corner', where the baskets and spears and other ritual objects were kept which were used in the ancestral cult. Only the owner of the hut or those taking part in the ritual could approach this corner.

In this land, into the cultural pattern of Ngoni village and household life, the Ngoni children were born. In such villages and homes they passed their earlier years, and grew from boys and girls to young adults.

The Ngoni kingdoms

When the Ngoni made parts of Nyasaland their homeland they set up conquest states on the pattern which they had been familiar with in southern Africa. Where they settled, they either conquered the local peoples who lived in that area, or accepted their submission. Until the British administration was established the Ngoni carried on wars and raids against neighbouring peoples to enlarge the boundaries of their kingdoms. As a conquest state, similar to that of the Ndebele in Southern Rhodesia, the population of the Ngoni kingdoms was of mixed origin, some whose ancestors came from Natal, some from the territories passed through on their northward march, and some from Nyasaland itself.

The kingdoms were organized on a centralized pattern with the Paramount Chief as supreme ruler and subordinate chiefs under him. The Ngoni code of law operated in the courts of the chiefs, and, as they proudly said, 'there was one law for all people'. Military service was required from all young men, and each territorial chief had to bring his quota of warriors to the Paramount's village when a war summons went out. Military service, obedience to the law,

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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181 577 828 [182] The four so-called personal values will be reflected in the Ngoni personality traits which we are going on to discuss. There are however two values which did not appear to fit into any integrated system, and which yet recurred as themes in Ngoni culture, and here and there in the ideas inherent in child training. One was the theme of childhood innocence, which was much deeper and more subtle than merely keeping children in ignorance of sexual life and intercourse. The other was the value set on the 'gentle' man. He was a man who appeared to be almost wholly self-controlled, able to have normal sexual intercourse with his wives but not always thinking about women, showing sternness but without anger, being just but also merciful. These were the qualities looked for in the man responsible for the guardianship of certain head villages where the ancestor cult was [769] carried on, and who was entrusted with the ritual associated [778] with the ancestor cult. In the more ancient ritual, such as carrying the sacred emblem before the armies, it was young boys, exemplifying the childhood innocence theme, who were entrusted with this charge. In the more modern con- [793] texts, many of the outstanding Ngoni ministers in the church were recognized and revered as 'gentle' men.

The Ngoni ideal personality

577 Chapters IV and V, as well as Chapters VI and VII, showed that there were certain elements in the Ngoni ideal of what their children should be like which were common to young men and women, to boys and girls, while others were emphasized only for girls or for boys. Among the common traits we have already seen the outstanding emphasis on 'respect' in all forms of behaviour and in all kinds of contact with older people, and with others who should be 'honoured'. Part of this respect was shown in obedience, and with this obedience in all the detailed inter-personal relations with senior people was associated, in the individual's relations to society as a whole, being law-abiding and complying with Ngoni law.

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

in general, encouraged co-operation between tribes and have treated all tribes as equals. They have emphasized the values of peace rather than a war, and have condemned pagan rites. In the light of this teaching legends have been modified to conform to modern values. The barbarity of the raids has been minimized and the good qualities of the old military discipline have been extolled. Sometimes men say that the old armies never fought but only danced, or that people from other tribes were not captured but all joined the Ngoni of their own free will (as in fact some did). It is said that there was never any ancestor-worship; the names of the Paramount Chief's ancestors were merely mentioned in prayers "as King George is mentioned now". This process by which the Ngoni conquerors of yesterday are made to look like the European conquerors of today is no new phenomenon. The Ngoni identified themselves with European rather than with their matrilineal neighbours even before the European conquest. Wiese, himself the main agent of their defeat, wrote, "They are very proud, looking down on all the other tribes with contempt, and think they show great courtesy whenever they assure the European traveller that the Whites may be related to them."[4]

Another traveller, arriving from the south in 1896, relates how he ran into an armed patrol on the outskirts of Ngoni country. His own carriers ran away but he called out to the patrol that he was a friend of the Paramount Chief, speaking in Zulu. He then heard them saying, "He is an Ngoni and a white man."[5] My own informants told me that the old Ngoni language was closer to English than to Nyanja.

This reinterpretation of the past in the light of the present has not produced a consistent picture of a proto-European society. The inconsistencies of the present remain and are reflected in the ambivalent attitude adopted to the past. Although in one context people recall that everything was well ordered and peaceful in the past, in other contexts they dwell on the unlimited power of the Paramount Chief and the fierceness of his warriors. An aristocratic man once said to me at a beer party, "If this was the old days I would kill all these Cewa drinking here." Yet the general impression which people usually try to convey is of a disciplined, proud, and successful people.

This picture is accepted not only by Ngoni themselves but also by Europeans. For us it is one part of the good old days when Africans still smiled and were nature's gentlemen. Our picture of the Ngoni contains fewer concessions to contemporary White values, for the very distinction between Whites now and Blacks then increases the attractiveness of the picture. Ancestor worship and polygyny are not unwelcome in a Black Arcadia.

Ngoni nowadays compare themselves with their European and Indian neighbours and envy their apparent power and wealth. They seek to rationalize their own relative failure in terms of their past. It is in this connection

4. Wiese, *Geschichte*, pp. 200 f.

5. Later, when he had satisfactorily answered questions on Zululand geography, Mp'zeni said of him, "He is a chief . . . he is an Angoni, one of us." Deare, *Slave Raiders*, pp. 19 and 25.

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890)1901
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535 challenge is sent from one group of villages to another. And on the day appointed the strangers arrive walking in procession. The girls and women are dressed in their gaudiest clothes, and their heads and arms are decked with bright coloured beads, and the claws of lions and leopards. The lads carry dancing sticks and miniature shields. The strangers open the dance. The girls standing together and holding reed wands in their hands sing in chorus, while the men arranged in a great semi-circle dance and sing. Their dance is wonderfully energetic and graceful, and is executed with a rythm and unison which is fascinating. You can hear a long way off the hundred feet come down on the earth of the kraal with a thud as of one man. When they have danced for about an hour they give way to their rivals. The home villagers step in and dance for another hour. And so on they go from ten o'clock till about four. There is no mingling of men and women. And the whole exercise is chaste, healthful, and beautiful. It is quite the show piece of our village life.

181 And now a few remarks in conclusion on their religious beliefs. I do not intend to say much on this point as one only can get at the inner meaning of their faith after long and careful investigation,
771 and with a thorough knowledge of their language. Their religion was not formulated. If you ask them about it they can tell you little or nothing. They will deny that they knew anything of God until we came. Their observances were scarcely recognised by themselves, they were the spontaneous and almost unconscious expression of a people groping after the unknown God if haply they might find Him. They recognise a spirit who presides over the universe.

776 They have a name for Him which means the great great one. But the ordinary name is the one which south of the Zambesi is used for all white men, and seems also to imply some feeling of wisdom and greatness. But they seem to have no idea of God's imminence in the world. He is rather the mighty far away Spirit
771 to whom men cannot come. Along with this, homage is made to great mountains and ancient trees, and to the strong elemental forces, as thunder and lightening. But this seems to me to be an
[177] addition which has come through their residence among the Tumbuka.

● 769 The great pervading article in their religious life is reverence and dread of the ancestral spirits. The whole land is full of their presence. And offerings are continually made to them to appease

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890) 1901
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their anger and propitiate them. Yet this recognition is not made in any degree of affection but in the times of dark necessity. When the rain has not fallen, when locusts swarm and eat up their crops, when sickness and death are abroad in the village, the spirits are working out their vengeance for being neglected. Then they are remembered and sacrifice is made. There are also certain ceremonial observances on important occasions. Before the gardens are hoed, and when the reaping time draws near; if an army is going out to battle, or when a coronation takes place, then prayer is made. The confusion of the old and new ideas was amusingly illustrated at the last coronation ceremony, when Mperembe, the eldest sub-chief, sacrificed a bull, and offering it to the spirit of the dead chief prayed him to bless the new chief, then added, "and, O Mombera, bless the teachers when they go about teaching the people the words of God." There was something very beautiful in this recognition of Christianity as but a fuller shining of the dim light they had.

Their old men are full of stories and traditions, some of them are uncommonly like the stories of Uncle Remus, and others with a curious echo of Old Testament story. There is a hill near Ekwendeni, where tradition says a great tower was built by the Tumbuka to reach into the moon. But the white ants ate away the foundation and the tower fell and the people were killed. I passed below this hill when I was on my way home, and chaffed my carriers on trying to build so great a tower with wood. They laughed, and said, "But do you know the story of the hill over there?" pointing to the north. No, I said, what is it? And they told me how that long ago the Tumbuka found the country too narrow, so they decided to climb into heaven and cultivate new gardens there. So they gathered the nation together and cut down all the trees, and began to build a huge tower on this hill. When they had got a great way up, some cried "Stop, we need build no more. Here is a ladder coming down out of heaven." And they looked up and saw great roots hanging down. So the people caught hold of these roots and began climbing hand over hand up to heaven. But suddenly while they were all climbing, the roots broke, and the nation fell to the earth and was snuffed out.

Like other children of nature there are men and women in the tribe who seem to have a wonderful gift of second sight. Forty years ago a regiment went out on a great raid. The witch doctor in blessing them told them that they would meet a white man